

# THE GUARDIAN

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## Prospects for Iraq’s Stability: A Challenging Road Ahead *January 2007*

### OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR OF NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE

The Director of National Intelligence serves as the head of the Intelligence Community (IC), overseeing and directing the implementation of the National Intelligence Program and acting as the principal advisor to the President, the National Security Council, and the Homeland Security Council for intelligence matters.

The Office of the Director of National Intelligence is charged with:

- Integrating the domestic and foreign dimensions of US intelligence so that there are no gaps in our understanding of threats to our national security;
- Bringing more depth and accuracy to intelligence analysis; and
- Ensuring that US intelligence resources generate future capabilities as well as present results.

### NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE COUNCIL

Since its formation in 1973, the National Intelligence Council (NIC) has served as a bridge between the intelligence and policy communities, a source of deep substantive expertise on critical national security issues, and as a focal point for Intelligence Community collaboration. The NIC's key goal is to provide policymakers with the best, unvarnished, and unbiased information. Its primary functions are to:

- Support the DNI in his role as Principal Intelligence Advisor to the President and other senior policymakers.
- Lead the Intelligence Community's effort to produce National Intelligence Estimates (NIEs) and other NIC products that address key national security concerns.
- Provide a focal point for policymakers, warfighters, and Congressional leaders to task the Intelligence Community for answers to important questions.
- Reach out to nongovernment experts in academia and the private sector—and use alternative analyses and new analytic tools—to broaden and deepen the Intelligence Community's perspective.

NIEs are the DNI's most authoritative written judgments concerning national security issues. They contain the coordinated judgments of the Intelligence Community regarding the likely course of future events.

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# News you can use News you can use

This is an e-mail from the Chief of Chaplains at Walter Reed AMC. He provides another perspective on the Walter Reed Issue.

**Subject: Can't be quiet any longer**

I have had enough and am going to give my perspective on the news about Walter Reed Army Medical Center. Please understand that I am speaking for myself and I am responsible for my thoughts alone. The news media and politicians are making it sound like Walter Reed is a terrible place and the staff here has been abusing our brave wounded soldiers; what a bunch of bull!

I am completing my 24th year of service in the Army next month so you decide for yourself if I have the experience to write about this topic. I have been the senior clinical chaplain at Walter Reed for four years and will leave to go back

to the infantry this summer. I supervise the chaplain staff inside Walter Reed that cares for the 200 inpatients, the 650+ daily outpatients from the war who come to us for medical care, the 4000+ staff, and over 3000 soldiers and their families that come for clinical appointments daily. Walter Reed has cared for over 5500 wounded from the war. I cannot count the number of sick and non-battle injured that have come through over that timeframe. The staff at this facility has done an incredible job at the largest US military medical center with the worst injured of the war. We have cared for over 400 amputees and their families. I am privileged to serve the wounded, their families, and our staff.

When the news about building 18 broke I was

on leave. I was in shock when the news broke. We in the chaplains office in Walter Reed, as well as the majority of people at Walter Reed, did not know anyone was in building 18. I didn't even know we had a building 18. How can that happen? Walter Reed is over 100 acres of 66 buildings on two installations. Building 18 is not on the installation of Walter Reed and was believed to be closed years ago by our department. The fact that some leaders in the medical brigade that is in charge of the outpatients put soldiers in there is terrible. That is why the company commander, first sergeant, and a group of platoon leaders and platoon sergeants were relieved immediately. They failed their soldiers and the Army. The commanding general was later relieved (more about this) and his sergeant major has been told to move on--if he gets to. The brigade sergeant major was relieved and more relief's are sure to come and need to. As any leader knows, if you do not take care of soldiers, lie, and then try to cover it up, you are not worthy of the commission you hold and should be sent packing. I have no issue, and am actually proud, that they did relieve the leaders they found who knew of the terrible conditions some of our outpatients were enduring. The media is

**The Guardian is published monthly by Dennis Blessing, Service Officer of the Madera County Veterans Service Office. It is freely issued, via email, to all Madera Veterans and Service Organizations.**

**The primary purpose of this publication is to provide County Veterans with a timely news source; effectively informing veterans of VA up-dates and other pertinent information. Hopefully, it will also serve as an inter-group vehicle, announcing important activities and information offered by other local service organizations.**

**Your comments and suggestions are always welcomed.**

*Dennis Blessing, Publisher*

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**Donations and ticket sales received prior to May 31, 2007 will receive matching funds from Thrivent Financial for Lutherans. All donors, whether donating by mail or online, will receive a receipt from the Veterans Memorial Museum for tax purposes.**

**If you would like to print out a donation form and mail a check, click [HERE](#)**

**You can also make a tax-deductible donation securely online using your credit card or your PayPal account. It's safe and secure.**

**Simply click the DONATE button next to the amount you would like to contribute.**

**PLEASE NOTE: There will be a small service charge on all online payments.**

**Scroll down and you can also order your Heroes of the Valley tickets online.**

**Thank you in advance for helping the Veterans Memorial Museum in Fresno, CA.**

***Before you leave, here are 2 sites you may enjoy visiting:***

**Click [HERE](#) to visit the museum's website**

**Click [HERE](#) to visit the website of Stories of Service - a great program that started in Fresno and is now nationwide**

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making it sound like these conditions are rampant at Walter Reed and nothing could be further from the truth. We need improvements and will now get them. I hate it that it took this to make it happen.

The Army and the media made MG Weightman, our CG, out to be the problem and fired him. This was a great injustice. He was only here for six months, is responsible for military medical care in the 20 Northeast states, wears four "hats" of responsibilities, and relies on his subordinate leaders to

know what is happening in their areas of responsibilities. He has a colonel that runs the hospital (my hospital commander), a colonel that runs the medical brigade (where the outpatient wounded are assigned and supposedly cared for), and a colonel that is responsible to run the garrison and installation. What people don't know is that he was making many changes as he became aware of them and had requested money to fix other places on the installation. The Army did not come through until four months after he asked for the money, re-

member that he was here only six months, which was only days before they relieved him. His leaders responsible for outpatient care did not tell him about conditions in building 18. He has been an incredible leader who really cares about the wounded, their families, and our staff. I cannot say the same about a former commander, who was my first commander here at Walter Reed, and definitely knew about many problems and is in the position to fix them and he did not. MG Weightman also should not be held responsible for the military's unjust and inefficient medical board

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system and the problems in the VA system. We lost a great leader and passionate man who showed he had the guts to make changes and was doing so when he was made the scapegoat for others.

What I am furious about is that the media is making it sound like all of Walter Reed is like building 18. Nothing could be further from the truth. No system is perfect but the medical staff provides great care in this hospital. What needs to be addressed, and finally will, is the bureaucratic garbage that all soldiers are put through going into medical boards and medical retirements. Congress is finally giving the money that people have asked for at Walter Reed for years to fix places on the installations and address shortcomings. What they don't want you to know is Congress caused many problems by the BRAC process saying they were closing Walter Reed. We cannot keep nor attract all the quality people we need at Walter Reed when they know this place will close in several years and they are not promised a job at the new hospital. Then they did this thing call A76 where

they fired many of the workers here for a company of contractors, IAP, to get a contract to provide care outside the hospital proper. The company, which is responsible for maintenance, only hired half the number of people as there were originally assigned to maintenance areas to save money. Walter Reed leadership fought the A76 and BRAC process for years but lost. Congress instituted the BRAC and A76 process; not the leadership of Walter Reed.

What I wish everyone would also hear is that for every horror story we are now hearing about in the media that truly needs to be addressed, you are not hearing about the hundreds of other wounded and injured soldiers who tell a story of great care they received. You are not hearing about the incredibly high morale of our troops and the fact that most of them want to go back, be with their teammates, and finish the job properly. You should be very proud of the wounded troopers we have at Walter Reed. They make me so proud to be in the Army and I will fight to get their story out.

I want you to hear the whole story because our wounded, their families, our Army, and

the nation need to know that many in the media and select politicians have an agenda. Forget agendas and make the changes that have been needed for years to fix problems in every military hospital and the VA system. The poor leaders will be identified and sent packing and good riddance to them. I wish the same could be said for the politicians and media personalities who are also responsible but now want it to look like they are very concerned. Where have they been for the last four years? I am ashamed of what they all did and the pain it has caused many to think that everyone is like that. Please know that you are not hearing the whole story. Please know that there are thousands of dedicated soldiers and civilian medical staff caring for your soldiers and their families. When I leave here I will end up deploying. When soldiers in my division have to go to Walter Reed from the battlefield, I know they will get great medical care. I pray that you know the same thing. God bless all our troops and their families wherever they may be. God bless you all, +Chaplain John L. Kallerson





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## **"HEROES OF THE VALLEY"**

**A Veterans Day of Recognition**

**SUNDAY MAY 27, 2007**

**presented at**

**Veterans Memorial Museum**

**2425 Fresno Street - Fresno, CA**

**3:00 PM**

*Participate in this exciting fund-raising event to recognize and honor our veterans living in this area, and raise money for the renovation and upkeep, as well as bringing attention to the Veterans Memorial Museum so people can continue to visit this "Best Kept Secret"*

### **Silent Auction with Donors Recognition**

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- ★ Magician   ★ Veterans Memorial Museum Tours   ★
- ★ Personalized Dog Tags for the children   ★

### **Special Guest Appearances**

**Adult Tickets are \$15.00 each or \$25.00 for two**

**Under the age 18 are \$9.00 each**

**For information or to purchase tickets, please call 323-9226**



# 2 / 7 CAV AT WORK

U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Mike Rice looks through personal belongings of workers from a flour factory, Feb. 27, 2007, during a raid in Mosul, Iraq. Rice is with Delta Company, 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, out of Fort Bliss, Texas. U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Vanessa Valentine



U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Adam Johnson provides security over workers from a flour factory during a raid, Feb. 27, 2007, in Mosul, Iraq. Johnson is with Delta Company, 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, out of Fort Bliss, Texas. U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Vanessa Valentine



U.S. Army Staff Sgts. Adam Johnson and William Johnson discuss the location of a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device that exploded nearby during a raid on a flour factory in Mosul, Iraq, Feb. 27, 2007. The soldiers are with Delta Company, 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, out of Fort Bliss, Texas. U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Vanessa Valentine



# When big things happen in life, don't lose out

By Jenna Holtz  
TriWest Healthcare Alliance

The big events in life are busy times, but don't forget one important thing to avoid losing TRICARE health care coverage eligibility — keep your TRICARE information current.

It's simple to do. Just notify the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS) when life's big events occur.

The following Qualifying Life Events require updates of personal information to DEERS:

- marriage
  - divorce or annulment
  - moving
  - having a baby
  - adopting or obtaining legal custody of a child
  - a death in the family
- a child reaching age 21

Qualifying Life Event (QLE) changes should be made in DEERS as soon as possible, but enrolling newborns or adopted children in TRICARE Prime or Prime Remote must be completed within 60 days of the birth or adoption to continue Prime or Prime Remote coverage.

After adding a spouse or a child to DEERS, enroll them in TRICARE Prime or Prime Remote by visiting a TRICARE Service Center or mailing an enrollment form to the address on the form. The form is available on [www.triwest.com](http://www.triwest.com).

## How to update DEERS

Updating DEERS is simple, using any of the following options:

- Call the Defense Manpower Data Center Support Office (DSO) at 1-800-538-9552
- Fax address changes to DEERS at 1-831-655-8317

Mail address changes to:

Defense Manpower Data  
Center Support Office  
Attn: COA  
Seaside, CA 93955-6771

Make changes online at: <http://www.tricare.mil/DEERS>

Beneficiaries may also visit the nearest uniformed services personnel office (ID-card issuing facility).

If information is incorrect, only registered family members can make address changes. This can be done online at <http://www.tricare.mil/DEERS>.

The military sponsor (or someone with the sponsor's power of attorney) is the only individual who can add or delete a family member from DEERS. To do so, be prepared to provide such documents as:

- an original marriage license
  - divorce decree
  - adoption papers
- death or birth certificate  
and

**DD Form 1172** (Application for Uniformed Services Identification Card and DEERS Enrollment).

For more information visit [triwest.com](http://triwest.com), or [call](tel:1-888-TRIWEST) TriWest at 1-888-TRIWEST.



## AMERICAN FORCES PRESS SERVICE **NEWS ARTICLES**

### **VA Seeks Volunteers to Play ‘Taps’ at National Cemeteries**

By Gerry J. Gilmore

American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, March 6, 2007 – Hundreds of volunteer buglers and trumpeters are being sought to participate in Armed Forces Day observances held at veterans’ cemeteries nationwide and overseas, a U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs official said here yesterday.

The event, called “Echo Taps Worldwide,” will be held May 19 and is co-sponsored by the VA’s National Cemetery Administration and “Bugles Across America,” a volunteer group, said Michael Nacincik, the cemetery administration’s chief of communications and outreach support.

“Echo Taps” will take place at VA-operated national cemeteries, U.S. Department of the Interior/National Park Service national cemeteries, and American Battle Monuments Commission cemeteries located overseas, Nacincik said.

“It is an extremely important event for a number of reasons,” Nacincik said. “It honors the service of veterans to our country.”

The initiative also encourages musicians to perform as live buglers at veterans’ funeral ceremonies year round, Nacincik said. In 2006, 688,000 veterans died in the United States, he noted, with most belonging to the World War II generation.

“There is overwhelming popular support to have ‘Taps’ played at veterans’ funerals,” Nacincik said. “And, obviously, with that many burials taking place, there are not enough buglers to provide a live bugler at every burial.”

Nevertheless, Bugles Across America has done “a very good job” of obtaining volunteers to play “Taps” at military funerals, Nacincik said.

“It is important that our nation preserves the tradition of a live bugler to play final military honors,” Leslie Hampton, a Navy veteran and Bugles Across America volunteer, stated in a recent VA news release.

“Hopefully, ‘Echo Taps’ will go even further and help to identify people who know how to play ‘Taps’ or are willing to learn how to play ‘Taps’ and motivate them to want to provide the service when they’re available at veterans’ funerals in the future,” Nacincik said.

Volunteer buglers and trumpeters must register through the VA’s website, which is attached to the “Echo Taps” site at [www.echotaps.org](http://www.echotaps.org), Nacincik said.

The VA operates 124 veterans’ cemeteries across the United States, Nacincik said. Generally, persons who’ve received other than dishonorable discharges after completion of military service are eligible for burial at a VA-operated national cemetery, he noted.

#### **Related Sites:**

[Participate in Echo Taps Worldwide](#)

[Echo Taps](#)

[Department of Veterans Affairs Burial and Memorials information](#)



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### NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE ESTIMATES AND THE NIE PROCESS

National Intelligence Estimates (NIEs) are the Intelligence Community's (IC) most authoritative written judgments on national security issues and designed to help US civilian and military leaders develop policies to protect US national security interests.

NIEs usually provide information on the current state of play but are primarily "estimative"—that is, they make judgments about the likely course of future events and identify the implications for US policy.

The NIEs are typically requested by senior civilian and military policymakers, Congressional leaders and at times are initiated by the National Intelligence Council (NIC). Before a NIE is drafted, the relevant NIO is responsible for producing a concept paper or terms of reference (TOR) and circulates it throughout the Intelligence Community for comment. The TOR defines the key estimative questions, determines drafting responsibilities, and sets the drafting and publication schedule. One or more IC analysts are usually assigned to produce the initial text. The NIC then meets to critique the draft before it is circulated to the broader IC. Representatives from the relevant IC agencies meet to hone and coordinate line-by-line the full text of the NIE. Working with their Agencies, reps also assign the level of confidence they have in each key judgment. IC reps discuss the quality of sources with collectors, and the National Clandestine Service vets the sources used to ensure the draft does not include any that have been recalled or otherwise seriously questioned.

All NIEs are reviewed by National Intelligence Board, which is chaired by the DNI and is composed of the heads of relevant IC agencies. Once approved by the NIB, NIEs are briefed to the President and senior policymakers. The whole process of producing NIEs normally takes at least several months.

The NIC has undertaken a number of steps to improve the NIE process under the DNI. These steps are in accordance with the goals and recommendations set out in the SSCI and WMD Commission reports and the 2004 Intelligence Reform and Prevention of Terrorism Act. Most notably, over the last year and a half, the IC has:

- ***Created new procedures to integrate formal reviews of source reporting and technical judgments.***  
The DCIA, as the National HUMINT Manager, as well as the Directors of NSA, NGA, and DIA and the Assistant Secretary/INR are now required to submit formal assessments that highlight the strengths, weaknesses, and overall credibility of their sources used in developing the critical judgments of the NIE.
- ***Applied more rigorous standards.*** A textbox is incorporated into all NIEs that explains what we mean by such terms as "we judge" and that clarifies the difference between judgments of likelihood and confidence levels. We have made a concerted effort to not only highlight differences among agencies but to explain the reasons for such differences and to prominently display them in the Key Judgments.

### THE IRAQ ESTIMATE: HOW IT WAS PRODUCED

The Iraq Estimate, *Prospects for Iraq's Stability: A Challenging Road Ahead*, followed the standard process for producing National Intelligence Estimates (NIEs), including a thorough review of sourcing, in-depth Community coordination, the use of alternative analysis and review by outside experts. Shortly after receiving the Congressional request, the NIC organized a workshop with academic and former government experts to scope out terms of reference (TOR) for the Estimate. IC drafters compiled the initial draft that was reviewed by the NIC and DNI in December. A revised draft was submit-

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the sourcing. As part of the normal coordination process, analysts had the opportunity to register “dissents” and provide alternative analysis. Reactions by the three outside experts who read the final product were highlighted in the text. The National Intelligence Board, composed of the heads of the 16 IC agencies and chaired by the DNI, reviewed and approved the Estimate on 29 January. As with other NIEs, it is being distributed to senior Administration officials and Members of Congress.

### *What We Mean When We Say: An Explanation of Estimative Language*

When we use words such as “we judge” or “we assess”—terms we use synonymously—as well as “we estimate,” “likely” or “indicate,” we are trying to convey an analytical assessment or judgment. These assessments, which are based on incomplete or at times fragmentary information are not a fact, proof, or knowledge. Some analytical judgments are based directly on collected information; others rest on previous judgments, which serve as building blocks. In either type of judgment, we do not have “evidence” that shows something to be a fact or that definitively links two items or issues.

Intelligence judgments pertaining to likelihood are intended to reflect the Community’s sense of the probability of a development or event. Assigning precise numerical ratings to such judgments would imply more rigor than we intend. The chart below provides a rough idea of the relationship of terms to each other.

We do not intend the term “unlikely” to imply an event will not happen. We use “probably” and “likely” to indicate there is a greater than even chance. We use words such as “we cannot dismiss,” “we cannot rule out,” and “we cannot discount” to reflect an unlikely—or even remote—event whose consequences are such it warrants mentioning. Words such as “may be” and “suggest” are used to reflect situations in which we are unable to assess the likelihood generally because relevant information is nonexistent, sketchy, or fragmented.

In addition to using words within a judgment to convey degrees of likelihood, we also ascribe “high,” “moderate,” or “low” confidence levels based on the scope and quality of information supporting our judgments.

- “High confidence” generally indicates our judgments are based on high-quality information and/or the nature of the issue makes it possible to render a solid judgment.
- “Moderate confidence” generally means the information is interpreted in various ways, we have alternative views, or the information is credible and plausible but not corroborated sufficiently to warrant a higher level of confidence.

## Key Judgments

**Iraqi society’s growing polarization, the persistent weakness of the security forces and the state in general, and all sides’ ready recourse to violence are collectively driving an increase in communal and insurgent violence and political extremism. Unless efforts to reverse these conditions show measurable progress during the term of this Estimate, the coming 12 to 18 months, we assess that the overall security situation will continue to deteriorate at rates comparable to the latter part of 2006.** If strengthened Iraqi Security Forces (ISF), more loyal to the government and supported by Coalition forces, are able to reduce levels of violence and establish more effective security for Iraq’s population, Iraqi leaders could have an opportunity to begin the process of political compromise necessary for longer term stability, political progress, and economic recovery.

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- Nevertheless, even if violence is diminished, given the current winner-take-all attitude and sectarian animosities infecting the political scene, Iraqi leaders will be hard pressed to achieve sustained political reconciliation in the time frame of this Estimate.

### **The challenges confronting Iraqis are daunting, and multiple factors are driving the current trajectory of the country's security and political evolution.**

- Decades of subordination to Sunni political, social, and economic domination have made the Shia deeply insecure about their hold on power. This insecurity leads the Shia to mistrust US efforts to reconcile Iraqi sects and reinforces their unwillingness to engage with the Sunnis on a variety of issues, including adjusting the structure of Iraq's federal system, reining in Shia militias, and easing de-Bathification.
- Many Sunni Arabs remain unwilling to accept their minority status, believe the central government is illegitimate and incompetent, and are convinced that Shia dominance will increase Iranian influence over Iraq, in ways that erode the state's Arab character and increase Sunni repression.
- The absence of unifying leaders among the Arab Sunni or Shia with the capacity to speak for or exert control over their confessional groups limits prospects for reconciliation. The Kurds remain willing to participate in Iraqi state building but reluctant to surrender any of the gains in autonomy they have achieved.
- The Kurds are moving systematically to increase their control of Kirkuk to guarantee annexation of all or most of the city and province into the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) after the constitutionally mandated referendum scheduled to occur no later than 31 December 2007. Arab groups in Kirkuk continue to resist violently what they see as Kurdish encroachment.
- Despite real improvements, the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF)—particularly the Iraqi police—will be hard pressed in the next 12-18 months to execute significantly increased security responsibilities, and particularly to operate independently against Shia militias with success. Sectarian divisions erode the dependability of many units, many are hampered by personnel and equipment shortfalls, and a number of Iraqi units have refused to serve outside of the areas where they were recruited.
- Extremists—most notably the Sunni jihadist group al-Qa'ida in Iraq (AQI) and Shia oppositionist Jaysh al-Mahdi (JAM)—continue to act as very effective accelerators for what has become a self-sustaining inter-sectarian struggle between Shia and Sunnis.
- Significant population displacement, both within Iraq and the movement of Iraqis into neighboring countries, indicates the hardening of ethno-sectarian divisions, diminishes Iraq's professional and entrepreneurial classes, and strains the capacities of the countries to which they have relocated. The UN estimates over a million Iraqis are now in Syria and Jordan.

**The Intelligence Community judges that the term “civil war” does not adequately capture the complexity of the conflict in Iraq, which includes extensive Shia-on-Shia violence, al-Qa'ida and Sunni insurgent attacks on Coalition forces, and widespread criminally motivated violence. Nonetheless, the term “civil war” accurately describes key elements of the Iraqi conflict, including the hardening of ethno-sectarian identities, a sea change in the character of the violence,**

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**Coalition capabilities, including force levels, resources, and operations, remain an essential stabilizing element in Iraq.** If Coalition forces were withdrawn rapidly during the term of this Estimate, we judge that this almost certainly would lead to a significant increase in the scale and scope of sectarian conflict in Iraq, intensify Sunni resistance to the Iraqi Government, and have adverse consequences for national reconciliation.

- If such a rapid withdrawal were to take place, we judge that the ISF would be unlikely to survive as a non-sectarian national institution; neighboring countries—invited by Iraqi factions or unilaterally—might intervene openly in the conflict; massive civilian casualties and forced population displacement would be probable; AQI would attempt to use parts of the country—particularly al-Anbar province—to plan increased attacks in and outside of Iraq; and spiraling violence and political disarray in Iraq, along with Kurdish moves to control Kirkuk and strengthen autonomy, could prompt Turkey to launch a military incursion.

**A number of identifiable developments *could* help to reverse the negative trends driving Iraq's current trajectory. They include:**

- ***Broader Sunni acceptance of the current political structure and federalism*** to begin to reduce one of the major sources of Iraq's instability.
- ***Significant concessions by Shia and Kurds*** to create space for Sunni acceptance of federalism.
- ***A bottom-up approach***—deputizing, resourcing, and working more directly with neighborhood watch groups and establishing grievance committees—to help mend frayed relationships between tribal and religious groups, which have been mobilized into communal warfare over the past three years.

A key enabler for all of these steps would be stronger Iraqi leadership, which could enhance the positive impact of all the above developments.

**Iraq's neighbors influence, and are influenced by, events within Iraq, but the involvement of these outside actors is not likely to be a major driver of violence or the prospects for stability because of the self-sustaining character of Iraq's internal sectarian dynamics.** Nonetheless, Iranian lethal support for select groups of Iraqi Shia militants clearly intensifies the conflict in Iraq. Syria continues to provide safehaven for expatriate Iraqi Bathists and to take less than adequate measures to stop the flow of foreign jihadists into Iraq.

- For key Sunni regimes, intense communal warfare, Shia gains in Iraq, and Iran's assertive role have heightened fears of regional instability and unrest and contributed to a growing polarization between Iran and Syria on the one hand and other Middle East governments on the other. But traditional regional rivalries, deepening ethnic and sectarian violence in Iraq over the past year, persistent anti-Americanism in the region, anti-Shia prejudice among Arab states, and fears of being perceived by their publics as abandoning their Sunni co-religionists in Iraq have constrained Arab states' willingness to engage politically and economically with the Shia-dominated government in Baghdad and led them to consider unilateral support to Sunni groups.
- Turkey does not want Iraq to disintegrate and is determined to eliminate the safehaven in northern Iraq of the Kurdistan People's Congress (KGK, formerly PKK)—a Turkish Kurdish terrorist group.

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A number of identifiable internal security and political triggering events, including sustained mass sectarian killings, assassination of major religious and political leaders, and a complete Sunni defection from the government have the potential to convulse severely Iraq's security environment. Should these events take place, they could spark an abrupt increase in communal and insurgent violence and shift Iraq's trajectory from gradual decline to rapid deterioration with grave humanitarian, political, and security consequences. Three prospective security paths might then emerge:

- **Chaos Leading to Partition.** With a rapid deterioration in the capacity of Iraq's central government to function, security services and other aspects of sovereignty would collapse. Resulting widespread fighting could produce *de facto* partition,



**4/2/2007**  
**TIME TO TALK**  
A U.S. Army soldier from 2nd Battalion, 17th Field Artillery Military Transition Team, talks to Iraqi children in the Rusafa area of East Baghdad, Iraq, March 27, 2007, during a combined cordon and search operation with members of 3rd Battalion, 8th Brigade, 2nd Iraqi National Police Division. U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Bronco Suzuki



**3/29/2007**  
**HIGH-FIVE**  
U.S. Army 1st Lt. Meluus Ulechong, platoon leader for 2nd Platoon, Company B, 2nd Battalion, 35th Infantry Regiment, 25th Infantry Division, from Schofield Barracks, Hawaii, gets a high-five from a child in the neighborhood of Qubah, Iraq, March 25, 2007. U.S. Army Sgt. Armando Monroig



**3/28/2007**  
**ARMY PATROL**  
U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Juan Alba, Cpl. Joseph Casiano and fellow soldiers prepare to search a house in Ghazaliya, Iraq, March 23, 2007. The soldiers are from Black Hawk Company, 1st Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment, 3rd Stryker Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division. U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Tierney Nowland



**3/28/2007**  
**WEAPONS CACHE**  
U.S. Army Capt. Jess Stewart radios in the destroying of a van that contained a weapons cache during an operation to eliminate insurgents in Qubba, Iraq, March 24, 2007. Stewart is from Charlie Troop, 5th Squadron, 73rd Cavalry Regiment (Airborne Recon), 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, out of Fort Bragg, N.C. U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. JoAnn S. Makinano

# THE GUARDIAN

SERVING MADERA COUNTY VETERANS



## News You Can Use

### IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS

VA Regional Office, Oakland

1-800-827-1000

VA Life Insurance Center

1-800-669-8477

VA Medical Center Toll Free (Fresno)

1-888-826-2838

Cal-Vet Home Loan Information, (Fresno)

559-440-5132

Patient Advocate (Fresno VA)\*\*

Ext. 6970

Telephone Advice Nurse (Fresno VA)\*\*

Ext. 6933

Outpatient Clinic – Merced/Atwater (Castle)

209-381-0105

Service Representative: (DAV, Fresno VA)\*\*

Ext. 5642

Service Representative: (VFW, Fresno VA)\*\*

Ext. 5647

Service Representative: (AMVETS, Fresno VA)\*\*

Ext. 5816

Service Representative: (American Legion,  
Fresno VA)\*\*

Ext. 5648

\*\*Fresno VA Pharmacy, (to order 14 days before  
you run out call by touch tone phone)\*\*

559-225-6100 Ext. 5333

CVSO Madera County (pager) D. Blessing

559-661-6895

Fresno Vet Center (Fresno)

559-487-5660

Transportation to VA Medical appointments

\*\* Call VA Fresno toll free number first

1-888-826-2838 ext. 6424